01337

1975/03/24

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : S: D. Gompert

DATE: March 24, 1975

FROM : EA:Philip C. Habib

SUBJECT: Papers on Viet-Nam for The Secretary

Enclosed are two sets of the papers on Viet-Nam. Dick Smyser will be sending you some additional covering remarks. The topics covered by the enclosures are as follows:

1. Draft letter from The President to President Thieu (drafted by Graham Martin)

2. Congressional AID Strategy (drafted by EA)

3. Statement for The Secretary to use at his press conference on Wednesday (drafted by EA)

4. Possible Military Steps (drafted by NSC)

5. Short Speech for The President on General Weyand's Mission (drafted by NSC)

5A. DIPLOMATIC SCENARIO (DRAFTED BY NSC)

6. Draft Messages to the PRC, Soviet Union and Le Duc Tho (drafted by NSC)

7. Draft Messages to Asian Leaders (drafted by NSC)

8. Note on Evacuation of Americans from Danang (drafted by NSC)

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A SPEECH FOR THE PRESIDENT

Attached is a short speech that the President could make on national television in connection with General Weyand's mission. The purposes of the speech would be (1) to clarify what the President wishes General Weyand to do and (2) to try to structure the debate on Vietnam that will take place during a Congressional recess.

The draft is being cleared with Paul Theis' office. We expect to have his comments Tuesday morning.

In addition, several drafts are being prepared for a longer speech that could be made when General Weyand's mission returns, when our needs have been determined, and when the President submits his request to the Congress. Those drafts will be merged and will be submitted to you as appropriate.

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BY GBT, NARA, DATE 3/8/2000

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DRAFT SPEECH FOR THE PRESIDENT

Tonight I want to speak to you briefly about a subject that many Americans would like to forget and ignore. But it is one we cannot forget and that we certainly cannot ignore.

After two years of silence, the headlines are again screaming Vietnam.

The North Vietnamese have started a massive offensive against South Vietnam. South Vietnamese forces, short of fuel and ammunition, are withdrawing to positions that they can hold. A million people are leaving with them.

I am announcing tonight that I am sending General Frederick C. Weyand, Chief of Staff of the United States Army, to Vietnam for a first-hand look at the situation. I have instructed General Weyand to inform me about what has happened and to advise me as to the ways in which we might provide assistance to South Vietnam in this difficult time.

I know that this action, as well as the escalation of the war, will undoubtedly lead to renewed debate about Vietnam and about what the United States is doing there now.

In order to set this debate into the proper context, I want to deal briefly but directly with some of the principal issues which I know concern you.

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-- First, I have heard it said that Indochina is not vital to American security. And yet, I know that one of the reasons Secretary Kissinger met with such difficulties in reaching another agreement between Israel and Egypt these last few weeks was because both countries had lost some confidence in us because of what was happening in Vietnam. The world is one. What happens anywhere, no matter how remote, has an impact everywhere else. And when it happens in an area with which the United States has long been associated, it cannot help affect our position in the world and our ability to play an effective and constructive role for peace.

-- Second, I have heard it said that the people of Vietnam do not care about who governs them. Yet even now, in the midst of this offensive, they are continuing to fight. Even now, the refugees flee to the Government side rather than to the Communist side. These simple facts should give some pause to those who argue that the people of Vietnam do not care under which Government they live. We cannot deprive them of the opportunity to vote with their feet.

-- Third, I have heard it said that we are getting re-involved in Indochina. That is not so. Our forces have come home. We are not involved. What we are proposing is to give South Vietnam, as well as Cambodia, the help it needs to defend itself. We have done the same for many countries and we are still doing it for many others.

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-- Fourth, I have heard it said that we cannot do any more because we have already done as much as we should. It is true, we have done a great deal. But what we are being asked to do now is a lot less than what we have done before. And, if we do it right, it will do the job. South Vietnam was defending itself effectively so long as we gave it what it needed. When our Congress cut the aid, the North Vietnamese attacked. If we give South Vietnam what it needs, it can again defend itself.

-- Last, some people say that peace will come if we stop giving help. That is true. But it is a peace that we will remember with anguish. It will be a regimented peace imposed by outside forces on a people whom we have denied the means to defend themselves. It will not be a proud moment in our history nor in the history of those human freedoms that we have promised to protect.

We must act, and we must act quickly, to show that we will stand by our friends. How we respond in this moment will make a crucial difference to them, to us, and to our future.

I know the American people are tired, but I will not believe that they are blind.

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DIPLOMATIC SCENARIO

We can try several diplomatic options in support of our policy in Vietnam, but none are very attractive right now.

-- A meeting with Le Duc Tho is now out of the question because it would have a highly negative impact in South Vietnam, though Tho may offer to meet later in the offensive.

-- Reconvening the Paris Conference would not serve any useful purpose except cosmetic, especially since it would put more pressure on us than on the North Vietnamese.

-- The U.N. has not had a role in South Vietnam settlements, though it participated in the Act of Paris, and could not be expected to perform a role now.

-- We could send messages to the PRC, the Soviet Union, or Le Duc Tho (see attached package) in order to try to prevent further escalation by Hanoi, but we are in such a weak position that a favorable reaction seems unlikely.

-- We also could send Presidential letters to a number of Asian states in connection with General Weyand's visit to affirm our determination to support South Vietnam. All those states have heard for some time are negative reports from the Hill; they may be wondering what we want to do. We have a package of letters to every Asian leader, but we could send them only to a few close friends or states that may be in particular doubt (e.g., Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines, Korea).

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Messages from You on Indochina to the PRC, to the Soviet Union, and to Le Duc Tho

The situation in Vietnam is becoming increasingly grave. We are clearly in a position of weakness. With that in mind, you may not want to send any messages.

On the other hand, we see evidence that the North Vietnamese may escalate even further. They are clearly bent upon shock effect. They may begin using air and naval forces. Messages to their senior allies and to Le Duc Tho, even from a position of weakness, may make them think twice.

For that reason, you may at least want to consider sending these messages to the Chinese, the Russians, and Le Duc Tho. There is no other reason to do it now.

As for Le Duc Tho, we doubt that he will ask to talk to you now. He will wait until he sees what he has gained on the ground. But, of course, he would later love to be seen meeting with you when South Vietnam is dismembered or shrunk to one-third its size.

On the message to Ch'iao Kuan-hua which was put together by Smyser, Solomon and Lord, they emphasize three points for your attention: The message is phrased so as to imply to the Chinese that we are aware that their competition with the Soviets for influence in Hanoi imposes some limit on their ability to restrain the North Vietnamese, but that the result of the current escalation of fighting in Indochina will have spill-over effects which could seriously complicate the normalization process. This is suggested most directly by invoking the phrase about "tension in the area" rising, a clear but indirect reference to the Shanghai Communique. The message thus begins to link further steps toward normalization to PRC actions in third-country areas (as we have not done thus far regarding Korea or Cambodia). If this is more direct a linkage than you wish to make at this time, a more indirect phrasing, in brackets, is supplied as an alternative. At the same time, the phrase about "continuing intention and efforts to normalize relations on the basis of the Shanghai Communique" is designed to avoid any implication that we are now looking for a pretext to reject our commitment to that document.

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The message to Ch'iao Kuan-hua is at Tab A; the one to Gromyko is at Tab B; and the one to Le Duc Tho is at Tab C.

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Message for PRC Foreign Minister Ch'iao Kuan-hua:

Mr. Foreign Minister:

I am writing to you to inform you that we are deeply concerned and disturbed by the recent military actions of the North Vietnamese authorities. Their total lack of restraint can only indicate a purposeful decision to throw aside the Paris agreements on Vietnam.

Beginning on March 10, 1975, North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam launched attacks against a number of military bases and district and provincial capitals of the Republic of Vietnam.

North Vietnam has also sent elements of three of its reserve divisions directly into South Vietnam across the Demilitarized Zone.

In blatant violation of the Act of Paris, North Vietnamese forces have captured five provinces previously controlled by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and clearly under the control of that Government at the time of the cease-fire. In doing this, they have destroyed thousands of homes and made refugees of hundreds of thousands of people.

They have openly admitted, in the January issue of their Party journal Hoc Tap, that they are conducting these attacks and are pursuing a policy of military escalation. Our intelligence reveals

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that the North Vietnamese plan to continue these acts of aggression, including attacks on the ancient capital of Hue and on Tay Ninh Province near Saigon.

The recent blatant attacks by North Vietnamese forces, led by tanks and anti-aircraft weapons supplied by outside powers, one of which has hegemonistic ambitions toward the Asian region, represent a complete abrogation of the Paris Agreement of which you are a signatory. These developments are now returning the Indochina war to the level of a major international issue. As these attacks occurred immediately after the visit to Hanoi of a military delegation from your country, the most serious questions are raised about the willingness of outside powers to urge restraint on the authorities in Hanoi.

As tension in this area rises (as the situation in Indochina becomes more grave), and in circumstances which make clear to the American people the failure of restraint on the part of the North Vietnamese (on the Communist side), our efforts to work toward a stabilization of Asia and to oppose hegemony cannot but be seriously complicated. This is all the more disturbing in view of our continuing intention and efforts to normalize relations between our two countries on the basis of the Shanghai Communique.

Now we have intelligence indications that the North Vietnamese plan escalate further. This cannot be allowed to happen. The North Vietnamese must be counseled to halt their aggression, to engage in

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no further escalation, and to return to the cease-fire.

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Message for Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko

Dear Mr. Foreign Minister:

I am writing to express very frankly my deep concern over the recent actions of the North Vietnamese authorities.

Beginning on March 10, 1975, North Vietnamese forces in South Vietnam launched attacks against a number of military bases and district and provincial capitals of the Republic of Vietnam.

North Vietnam has also sent three of its reserve divisions directly into South Vietnam across the Demilitarized Zone.

In blatant violation of the Act of Paris, of which you are a signatory, North Vietnamese forces have captured five provinces previously controlled by the Government of the Republic of Vietnam and clearly under the control of that Government at the time of the cease-fire. In doing this, they have destroyed tens of thousands of homes and made refugees of hundreds of thousands of people.

The North Vietnamese have openly admitted, in the January issue of their Party journal, that they are conducting these attacks and are pursuing a policy of military escalation. Our information has revealed that the North Vietnamese plan to continue these aggressive acts, including attacks on the ancient capital of Hue and on Tay Ninh Province near Saigon.

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The recent blatant attacks by North Vietnamese forces led by tanks and anti-aircraft weapons, including equipment supplied by the Soviet Union, represent an abrogation of the Paris Agreement. They return the Indochina war to the level of a major international issue. As these attacks occurred immediately after the visit of Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin to Hanoi, it can only be assumed that the Soviet Union was aware of and acceded to the decisions involved. Therefore, your Government must share a major responsibility for what is happening now in South Vietnam as well as for the broader implications.

I hardly need say that such a role by your country is clearly contrary to the spirit of the Joint Communique of July 3, 1974, and to Point Three of the Basic Principles of Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, which states the special responsibility of our countries to do everything in their power so that conflicts or situations will not arise which would serve to increase international tensions. Disregard for these documents governing our relations is a matter of profound concern.

Now we have intelligence indications that the North Vietnamese plan to escalate further. This cannot be allowed to happen. The North Vietnamese must be counseled to halt their aggression, to engage in no further escalation, and to return to the cease-fire.

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Message to Special Advisor Le Duc Tho

Mr. Special Advisor:

I am shocked and outraged at the attacks of your forces throughout South Vietnam and across the demilitarized zone. This is blatant aggression of the most overt kind. It represents an abrogation by force of the Paris Agreements.

If you continue and intensify these attacks, you will preclude any further discussion of the implementation of the political provisions of the Paris Agreements. You must bear full responsibility for this and for all consequences. You must not underestimate the reaction of the United States nor the impact of your actions here and all over the world.

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MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ GDS March 24, 1975

Attached are letters to all Asian leaders:

They all contain the general themes that the President is deeply concerned about the current situation in South Vietnam, that the U. S. will continue solid support to South Vietnam, and that the U. S. will remain faithful to its traditions and commitments in Asia. The letters have been adapted to the circumstances obtaining in each particular country.

There is an argument against sending letters at this point: Congress may not in the end vote the additional money we have requested. However, it is clear that regardless of Congressional action, we will continue some level of support for South Vietnam. In addition, if we wait for Congress to process our supplemental request, the delay will increase the chance of confusion in the minds of Asian leaders in regards our intentions toward South Vietnam, as well as toward Asia in general.

The letters are addressed to:

Thai Prime Minister Khukrit
Lao Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma
Malaysian Prime Minister Razak
Singaporean Prime Minister Yew
Indonesian President Suharto
Philippine President Marcos
Australian Prime Minister Whitlam
New Zealand Prime Minister Rowling
ROC Premier Chiang Ching-kuo
Japanese Prime Minister Miki
South Korean President Park

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GG, 3/8/2000

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